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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

March 18, 2003

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ROBERT S. RANGEL, STAFF DIRECTOR

The President
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

This is a critical week for our nation and for the world. As you prepare to make the most difficult decision of sending our troops into combat, the thoughts and prayers of all Americans are with you. My colleagues here in Congress have many different views on the wisdom of action in Iraq and the severity of its consequences. But we are united in our support for all the men and women who serve this nation.

There is no doubt that our forces will be victorious in any conflict, but there is great potential for a ragged ending to a war as we deal with the aftermath. I appreciate the efforts that members of your administration have made to keep me informed about plans for the administration and reconstruction of Iraq following military conflict. Your team has thought about many of the things that will need to be done.

Secretary Rumsfeld frequently talks about the list he keeps of things that could go wrong in an Iraq war. I have kept my own list—of things that could go wrong after the war is over. The list below is indicative of this broader list. My hope is that this will be helpful to members of your administration as you continue to plan for all possibilities. These are not complete scenarios but rather a series of possible problems that could occur in some combination.

Internal Divisions and External Influences in Iraq

- Without access to Iraq through Turkey, U.S. troops are not present in northern Iraq in large numbers. Turkey enters northern Iraq to establish a buffer zone and fighting breaks out between the Turks and Kurds. A significant U.S. military force is needed to separate the groups, complicating the governmental transition and international support.
- An uprising in Kirkuk leaves the Kurds in control of areas of the city and surrounding area. This triggers a large Turkish invasion to protect the Turkmen minority and to prevent Kurdish control of oil resources. Again this would require U.S. military resources with all the attending effects.
- In the event that Turkey crosses into Iraq, Iran may do the same, ostensibly to stem the refugee flows from southern Iraq and to protect Shi'a interests.

- Shi'a populations in the south rebel and undertake attacks against Sunnis. U.S. troops must step in to protect the Sunnis and restore peace. These tensions resurface during attempts to build a federal and representative government.
- Urban fighting in the south brings Shi'a into conflict with Sunnis. The resulting devastation causes a refugee crisis as Shi'a make for the Iranian border. The results of Saddam's policy of forced Arabization of areas like Kirkuk yield dangerous consequences. Groups like the Kurds flow back into these areas seeking to reclaim their former homes and land, sparking conflict with Iraqi Arabs.
- Attempts to fashion a federal government in Baghdad prove difficult. Iran is able to establish proxies for its influence among the Shi'a representatives. Once in Iraq, infighting breaks out among members of the former Iraqi opposition in exile. The United States is unable to transition the administration of Iraq effectively and has to remain in place, with significant military backing.
- The war involves lengthy urban combat, particularly in Baghdad. Most infrastructure is destroyed resulting in massive humanitarian problems. The emphasis on humanitarian aid distracts from efforts to establish a new government. Once established the government faces massive political pressure from the sustained humanitarian crisis.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

- Saddam uses biological and chemical weapons against advancing U.S. troops, but also inflicts substantial civilian casualties. Efforts to stabilize cities and to establish a government are complicated by the need to deal with the large number of dead and to decontaminate affected areas.
- Saddam uses biological and chemical weapons directly against civilian populations or against another Arab country and seeks to affix blame for civilian suffering to the United States. Over the period of occupation, this resentment complicates U.S. efforts to maintain support for reconstruction efforts.
- U.S. troops are unable to quickly find all of Saddam's capabilities, requiring a long, labor-intensive search and anxiety as to when the task is complete.
- Regional leaders, for money or to gain influence, retain caches of WMD and transfer some to terrorist groups.
- Saddam attacks Israel with missiles containing weapons of mass destruction. Israel retaliates. Arab countries, notably Saudi Arabia and Jordan, come under intense political pressure to withdraw their support from the U.S. war effort. U.S. forces are forced to reposition operational centers into Iraq and Kuwait, complicating reconstruction and transition efforts.

Oil Resources

- Saddam sabotages a significant number of wells before his defeat. Current estimates indicate he may already have wired up to 1,500 of these wells. The damage takes years to contain at great economic and environmental cost and removes a major source of reconstruction funding.
- Internal groups, such as the Kurds, seize oil-rich land before American troops reach the area, causing internal clashes over these resources. Militant Shi'as seize other wells in the South.

International Support

- The United States takes immediate control of Iraq's administration and of reconstruction. The United Nations can't agree on how involved to get given the divisions among the Security Council about the need for conflict. The lack of UN involvement in the administration makes the European Union and others less likely to give. This situation delays reconstruction and puts more of the cost on the United States and a smaller number of partners.
- U.S. reconstruction efforts that give U.S. corporations a great role at the expense of multilateral organizations and other participation—as was detailed in yesterday's Wall Street Journal—spur resentment and again limit the willingness of others to participate.

American Commitment

- Stabilization and reconstruction prove more difficult than expected. U.S. troop requirements approach 200,000—the figure General Shinseki has mentioned—for a sustained period. This puts pressure on troop rotations, reservists, their families, and employers and requires a dramatic increase in end-strength.
- Required funding reaches the figure suggested by a recent Council on Foreign Relations assessment—\$20 billion annually for several years. During a period of economic difficulty, the American public calls for greater burdensharing.

It is my hope that none of these eventualities comes to pass. But as you and all military leaders know, good planning requires considering the range of possibilities. It also requires advance preparation of the American people. You have regularly outlined the reasons for why the United States must disarm Iraq. I urge you to do the same in explaining why we must stay with Iraq for the long haul, even with the economic and military burdens this will entail.

As always, I am willing to help in any way I can to make this case to my colleagues and the American people.

Sincerely,



Ike Skelton
Ranking Democrat

cc: Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Honorable Paul D. Wolfowitz
Honorable Peter W. Rodman
Honorable Colin L. Powell
Honorable Richard L. Armitage
Honorable Condoleezza Rice